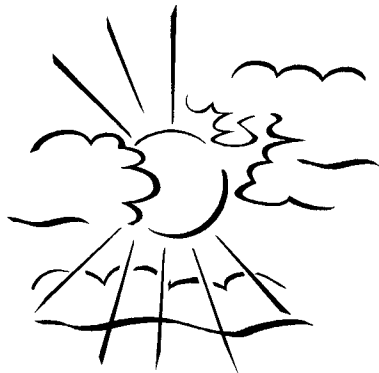


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Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, October 7, 2005

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Medicaid dental funds restored, but too late?

Some dentists say patients developed permanent problems during 2-year lapse

PUBLISHED: October 6, 2005

By Gina Joseph
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Now that Gov. Jennifer Granholm has signed a \$41 billion state spending plan that includes restoring Medicaid's adult dental services, an estimated 600,000 low-income, elderly and disabled people will have something to smile about.

Some dentists, however, feel damage already has been done by the lack of dental exams, teeth cleanings and filled cavities.

"These people have been without preventative care for two years," said Joe Dzenowagis, home finder in family foster care for MORC, the Macomb-Oakland Regional Center, a human services agency.

Dzenowagis knows of one man in his late 20s who will be eating pureed foods for the rest of his life because all of his teeth were pulled and he can't wear dentures because of a disability.

Robert Hogg was in such agony because of what appeared to be an abscessed tooth that he had to make an appointment with his primary care physician, who was able to prescribe antibiotics and pain medication.

Fortunately, he was able to get an appointment with Dr. Michelle Dziurgot, a Shelby Township dentist who does pro bono work for the Adopt a Smile program. MORC created the program after the state budget crisis left many people such as Robert unable to afford the dental care they need. The program encourages dentists and dental hygienists in Oakland and Macomb counties to volunteer to provide free preventive dental care or to "adopt" a person with dental needs.

"I do one patient per month at no charge," Dziurgot said. "Sometimes it involves a cleaning, sometimes an extraction, and other times a consultation."

In all cases it cost her money and time.

"It's been very challenging," said Dr. Michael Booth of the Tooth Booth in Fraser, who has been working with the Adopt a Smile program for close to a year. "You have to be very patient. ... The patient I've been seeing is verbally unable to express himself. I know he's appreciative but still, it's been difficult."

Despite the difficulties, dentists such as Dziurgot and Booth participate in the program and encourage other dental colleagues to do the same. Booth is also one of several members of the dental profession who lobbied to have the Medicaid benefits reinstated. Booth even created a dental documentary showing the impact of the Medicaid cuts.

The Michigan Department of Community Health budget for the 2006 fiscal year totals \$10.3 billion, and includes \$4.8 million allocated for adult dental Medicaid services.

"Adults will have the same type of coverage they had prior to the cuts in 2003," said T.J.

Bucholz with the Department of Community Health. Such coverage would include dental exams and X-rays, cleanings, filling cavities and other restorative work.

"We'll see," said Booth, who, just minutes earlier had finished a complicated and very expensive procedure on a man in the Adopt a Smile program. "Sometimes it's a shell game. The kids generally get the coverage first but the adults don't have anyone carrying their cross."

"It was an under-funded program to begin with," Dzenawagus said, referring to Medicaid's dental coverage. "We will continue the Adopt a Smile program and push to get it adopted statewide."

For further information on how to get involved with the Adopt a Smile program contact Mary Jo Hollebrands at MORC at (586) 263-8769.

Thursday, October 6, 2005

The Detroit News

Modernize health records to save lives, money

By Ziad Ojakli

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, it is common to hear reports from medical professionals describing the challenge of treating patients who lost everything, including their medical records. Precious time was lost in trying to figure out how to treat people with chronic diseases.

Most of us depend on doctors and pharmacists to keep track of medications, health histories and allergies. But when medical records are destroyed, where do you turn? Just as Katrina exposed an antiquated levee system, it also exposed a gaping hole in our health care record system. Senate Majority Leader Dr. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., and Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., have co-authored legislation to move from a paper-based health care system to one driven by secure electronic medical records. The bill promotes the use of electronic health records and helps create standards to ensure that all parts of a health information system can communicate together.

Now, automakers can track more information on a hurricane-damaged car in Louisiana through information technology tracking systems than medical personnel can find on evacuees. We can even tell you the kind of oil used in the last oil change. Yet, in most cases, we can't tell an evacuee about his or her medicines. Shouldn't every American expect the same levels of efficiency, accuracy and convenience that their cars have?

This nation has only started to use information technology to simplify the enormous tasks and costs of health care. We trail other industrialized countries in the use of health care information technology. In 2002, more than 90 percent of the primary care physicians in Sweden used electronic health records, nearly 60 percent in the United Kingdom, but only 17 percent in the United States.

According to a study by the Institute of Medicine, more than 44,000 deaths in this country were caused by preventable hospital medical errors. New advances in health care information technology may hold the key to help avoid some of these unnecessary tragedies.

Some U.S. companies are relying more on information technology solutions to improve quality and reduce health care costs. For example, Ford, GM and DaimlerChrysler have joined forces with the United Auto Workers and Medco, a pharmacy benefit manager, to encourage physicians to write prescriptions on wireless devices, sending them directly to pharmacies. Evidence shows this greatly reduces the risk of errors like illegible physician prescriptions. Electronic prescribing also gives physicians real-time access to important information when making critical and often last-minute decisions like surgery.

Some government studies show that e-prescribing technology could eliminate as many as two million harmful drug interactions annually. It is encouraging that the Department of Health and Human Services is using available electronic prescription drug records from retail pharmacies and pharmacy benefit managers to compile a database containing hurricane evacuees' prescription drug histories.

And the Frist-Clinton bill would help set standards for electronic medical records, provide incentives to create such systems through grants and create a federal coordinating office. The hurricane tragedies have magnified the need to embrace information technology in health care. The task is immense. But there are opportunities like the Frist-Clinton bill for a joint approach by government and industry to improve the health care dilemma. America needs to address health care costs and has to start somewhere, even if it is one byte at a time.

Ziad Ojakli is group vice president of corporate affairs at Ford Motor Co. Please e-mail letters to letters@detnews.com. George Weeks' column will return.

Free preschool for all merits money and minds in Michigan

Bay City Times

Friday, October 7, 2005

A plan that House Democrats have trotted out in Lansing makes so much sense, it's a wonder it hasn't been proposed before.

The legislators want every child in Michigan to have access to free preschool.

For years, the federal Head Start program and the state Michigan School Readiness Program have given preschool training to 4-year-olds from poor families.

And, of course, many wealthier families have written checks to send their kids to private preschools.

But, as is often the case, the vast middle class is left out.

That's about 60,000 children who aren't in the government preschool programs and whose parents can't afford private preschooling.

Just as in grades K-12, every child should have equal opportunity to excel in school. Scientific studies have shown that key parts of the brain develop before children ever enter kindergarten, usually at age 5.

Reasons enough to offer preschool for everyone.

Democrats estimate that gradually extending preschool to all children would cost \$85 million a year at first, then grow to \$400 million.

But they don't know where they'd get the money.

That's a huge gap in their plan.

But one that should be filled.

It's the only fair thing to do.

For every little Michigander.

Published October 7, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

State Rep. Dianne Byrum is an Onondaga
Democrat and House minority leader.

Dianne Byrum: Michigan, invest in early ed

House Democrats are introducing legislation to make free, high-quality early education available to all Michigan 4-year-olds. Our goal is to offer universal access to preschool by 2010. We will begin next year by doubling the number of children in Michigan's School Readiness Program to 50,000.

High-quality early education is the best investment we can make in our children so they can excel throughout school and beyond, and can better compete for the good-paying jobs of the 21st century.

Early education means greater achievement and more opportunities.

All the research shows children who begin learning early are better prepared to succeed in life. They are less likely to be held back in class, less likely to commit crimes and more likely to earn more as adults.

Ninety percent of the human brain develops before age 5, studies show. Linguistic connections, abstract concepts and social skills are formed in these early years. With early education, which emphasizes learning through play and games, these skills and neural connections are strengthened.

A long-term study in Ypsilanti found children with preschool were less likely to repeat a grade and more likely to excel throughout school; earned \$2,000, on average, more a month than their peers who didn't have preschool; and were less likely to commit crimes.

The High/Scope Perry study - which tracked students from 1962 at regular intervals - also found that every \$1 spent on high-quality early education saves taxpayers \$17 down the road.

Children with high-quality preschool also learn how to focus and to complete tasks. At this early age, they develop a work ethic that helps turn them into good students later in school.

We cannot afford to drag our feet on this important issue. Too many of our children are getting left behind.

Too many of our children begin school without the tools they need to learn. Too many of our children are struggling in class. Sadly, many of them also are dropping out, opening the door to delinquency, crime, unintended pregnancies and poverty.

House Democrats want to open another door, a door to greater opportunity. With high-quality preschool, we can help our children succeed, avoiding the pain of poverty and ensuring that they can instead live rewarding, productive lives.

Michigan must seize this opportunity.

Our legislation also will encourage more teachers to get early-education training, through more scholarships, and ensure that day care facilities are of the highest standards.

We must invest in our children.

And high-quality early education is the best investment we, as a state, can make in our citizens of tomorrow.

It is the foundation for success in school and beyond. It is the groundwork we can lay now to ensure our children become highly skilled and successful workers.

With universal access to high-quality preschool, we can pave the way today to a lifetime of learning for our children, giving them - and Michigan - the tools for future success.

Once upon a time ...

Thursday, October 6, 2005 2:27 PM EDT

U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz reads to children while visiting the Adrian Head Start program

By Justin R. Kalmes

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN - U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz was in town Wednesday to visit the Adrian Public Schools Head Start program and see how it operates. But before he could do that, the Battle Creek Republican had some more important business to tend to - reading to a group of 3- and 4-year-olds.

"Do you know what I have to do before I read?" Schwarz asked the group of about 15 preschoolers. "I have to put my glasses on. Some day all of you are going to have to put your glasses on before you read."

Schwarz's visit came at a time when Congress is reviewing legislation to reauthorize federal funding for Head Start programs throughout the country. The U.S. House of Representatives approved the bill last month and is waiting for the Senate to take action on the matter. David Bull, director of the Lenawee County Head Start program, said Schwarz's visit to the building was the first by a politician during his 11 years with the program. He said he's unsuccessfully invited legislators in the past to see how the program works and what it is about.

"I wanted to show (Schwarz) what we're doing here in Lenawee County," Bull said, noting that he hoped the visit would give the congressman some experience with Head Start so he might know whether a bill he votes on would benefit the program.

The congressman started his visit by touring the Adrian Head Start facility housed in the former Comstock Elementary School building with Bull, APS Superintendent Del Cochran and James Berryman, Lenawee County Education Association Uniserv director. After reading to the children, Schwarz sat down with Head Start employees to discuss the status of the Lenawee County program and issues facing it and others throughout the country.

Bull said that with the addition of a classroom in Morenci, Head Start has nine different locations in Lenawee County. He said 357 children are enrolled in one of Head Start's four program options.

"I really think that the Morenci site completes the program," Bull said. "We really feel we're located in all the areas where we can get to lots of kids."

Said Cochran: "This is a program that really needs to be countywide."

Topics addressed at the round table discussion included retaining the authority given to active policy councils that are made up of Head Start parents and community members, and teacher certification and retention. Twenty of the county's 34 Head Start teachers are certified by the High/Scope program's standards. Bull said retaining certified employees can be difficult because those individuals could earn a significantly higher salary teaching at the kindergarten level.

Schwarz told the group that he is a strong supporter of the Head Start program and would never cast a vote that would endanger its mission and goal. He said he's available to address other concerns those tied to the program may have.

"Head Start to me is one of the best programs that we've ever come up with in this country," Schwarz said.

He said he'll continue to work toward improving the Head Start reauthorization bill after the Senate sends an amended version of it back to the House.

"We want to get it right," he said.

Police: Girl Approached By Man Asking For Sex

Girl Approached While Walking To School

POSTED: 4:11 pm EDT October 6, 2005

A 12-year-old girl escaped a stranger encounter while walking to school on Detroit's west side on Thursday morning.

Police said a man approached the Hutchins Middle School student and asked her for sex.

The girl managed to run away from the man and made it to her school.

Police and the girl's parents were notified of the incident.

The stranger apparently fled the area and has yet to be found, according to Local 4 reports.

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Published October 7, 2005

VFW children's home growing

Eaton Rapids site will house more veterans' families

By Nicole Geary
Lansing State Journal

EATON RAPIDS - After a decades-long lull, it's time to grow this town's quiet community of veterans' kids and relatives.

Heavy equipment soon will roll into the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Home for Children, kicking off construction of the first new house in 40 years. The project will make room for more families on the campus of 36 homes - and fill at least a fragment of the nation's future veteran needs.

The 80-year-old private organization has been looking for ways to whittle a steady list of about 25 families waiting to enroll in its single-parent program.

Officials attribute the new demand, which picked up about four years ago, to better marketing and a growing population of women and single parents connected to the military.

Aware of the need, the United Auto Workers National Veterans Affairs Department stepped up to cover almost \$370,000 in building costs by fundraising and finding volunteer labor and materials. Until then, new construction wasn't possible for the nonprofit, which doesn't receive state or federal funding. Building the 2,400-square-foot duplex will help by housing up to eight families over 12 years. A family can stay up to three years.

Many participants are relatives of vets from the Vietnam War and other past wars, but the number of eligible candidates will continue increasing in the aftermath of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I think we're going to see our relevance to the military and the country be more," said spokesman Barry Walter. "We're adaptable to changes in society."

Until 2003, the home served only families with relatives who are or were members of the VFW or Ladies Auxiliary. But officials changed eligibility to include those with family members on active military duty after they began receiving inquiries from folks finding themselves unable to fulfill parenting and financial responsibilities while on duty.

Today's emerging crop of veterans' families includes more single parents who often don't have strong support systems, Executive Director Patrice Green said.

"They don't have that built-in cushion for themselves," she said. "It's important that places like the National Home are still here."

The home's 70-acre main campus provides a rent-free home for three years, money for clothes and food, and access to day care and schools. Case managers work with parents to reach goals ranging from improved parenting to finishing college and finding jobs.

"There's always somebody on call if we need them," said Dorothy, who's lived there for 15 months with three daughters. The organization recommends residents don't release their full names for security purposes.

Dorothy, 34, said the home has provided a supportive place while she works and finishes her associate's degree. Her father, two brothers and three uncles are veterans. "I needed this opportunity to move forward with my life and with my children," she said.

About the VFW National Home for Children

- Founded in Eaton Rapids in 1925
- Is funded through private donations
- Sits on a 70-acre main campus with 36 individual family homes, a community center, day care, guest lodge, chapel and administration buildings
- Serves children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of VFW and Ladies Auxiliary members and children of military service personnel

Main programs

- Single-parent families stay for three years in a goal-oriented program designed to build self-sufficiency.
- Children who cannot live with their families because of loss or neglect live in a family-like environment as long as necessary. There's also housing and support for children as they go on to college and adult life.

Contact Nicole Geary at 377-1066 or ngeary@lsj.com.

Governor Signs Legislation Increasing Penalties for Drug Dealers

October 6, 2005

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today signed legislation that creates tougher penalties, including life imprisonment, for drug dealers whose products cause death. Currently, Michigan law makes no distinction for cases where consumption of illegal drugs results in death.

“The men and women who peddle illegal drugs to our children and our neighbors need to know that they will be held responsible for their behavior,” said Granholm. “This legislation is a clear signal that Michigan is serious about stopping the sale of illegal drugs.”

Public Acts 167 and 168 make the illegal delivery of Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 narcotics a Class A felony if the narcotics are consumed by the person receiving them, or any other person, and death results.

Schedule 1 narcotics include controlled substances that have a high potential for abuse and have no accepted medical use in treatment in the United States or lack accepted safety for use in treatment under medical supervision.

Schedule 2 narcotics include controlled substances that have a high potential for abuse, have currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States or currently accepted medical use with severe restrictions, and the abuse of which may lead to severe psychic or physical dependence.

Class A felonies are punishable by up to life imprisonment.

Senate Bill 423 was sponsored by Senator Jud Gilbert (R-Algonac). House Bill 4673 was sponsored by Representative Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair Township). Representative Pavlov introduced the bill to honor a young woman who died of a drug overdose at Eastern Michigan University. Today is the 4th anniversary of her death.

Michigan Report

October 6, 2005

DRUG DEALERS FACE TOUGHER PENALTIES UNDER NEW LAW

Drug dealers could face up to life imprisonment for selling a substance that causes death. Until now, Michigan law didn't consider deaths that occurred as a result of illegal drug consumption in drug offense sentencing. The new law creates tougher penalties for peddlers by making the offense a Class A felony.

"The men and women who peddle illegal drugs to our children and our neighbors need to know they will be responsible for their behavior," said Governor Jennifer Granholm.

"This legislation is a clear signal that Michigan is serious about stopping the sale of illegal drugs."

The bills, SB 423, PA 168, and HB 4673, PA 167, were introduced to honor a woman who died of a drug overdose at Eastern Michigan University four years ago

Girl, 11, Accused Of Attacking Students On Bus

Bus Driver Calls Authorities For Help

POSTED: 12:22 pm EDT October 6, 2005

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. -- An 11-year-old girl was taken into custody for attacking students on a school bus on Wednesday, sheriff's deputies said.

Deputies said a fight apparently broke out on the bus on the way home from school.

Sheriff Mark Hackel said the 11-year-old -- a student at King Academy in Mount Clemens -- was described as "out of control."

"One of the boys tried to restrain her and tried to keep her from hitting or hurting the other kids," Hackel said. "At that time, she pulled out what was believed to be some kind of a key and struck him and actually cut him on the side of the neck."

Deputies responded after the bus driver contacted authorities for help.

The girl allegedly got rowdy when deputies attempted to take her into custody. Authorities said she kicked the side of a squad car and kicked a back window of the vehicle out of its frame, Local 4 reported.

The 11-year-old is being held at the Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center.

She faces charges of obstruction of police property, resisting and obstructing arrest and felonious assault.

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Teens claim threats, abduction; ex-boyfriend will stand trial

Web-posted Oct 7, 2005

By STEPHEN FRYE
Of The Oakland Press

ROCHESTER HILLS - Stark testimony of two teenage girls who said they were threatened with death by a former boyfriend for breaking up with him highlighted a preliminary exam for the young man.

Paul Marquis Samples, 17, Rochester Hills, will stand trial on charges of carjacking and kidnapping the two high school girls, a judge ruled Thursday after the exam.

Samples, in jail on a \$250,000 cash bond, is accused of kidnapping at knifepoint an 18-year-old girl, a longtime friend of his 17-year-old ex-girlfriend, Sept. 17. He then forced the 18-year-old to drive and pick up the ex-girlfriend, taking them both to Tennessee before releasing them the following afternoon.

The incident started innocently enough, with the 18-year-old going to pick up a pair of shoes Samples was supposed to buy her at his workplace at the Finish Line at Great Lakes Crossing. But, quickly, she thought something "was fishy." Then Samples pulled out a serrated kitchen knife with tape wrapped around the handle, said the girl. "He pointed it at me and told me to drive," she said. "I thought he was joking." Asked if he was serious, he put his left arm around her neck and pressed the knife to her face, saying, "Drive," she said. "He said he wanted to kill her (the ex)," the girl said, adding later that he intended to kill the teenager who was taking his ex-girlfriend to the homecoming dance.

"Paul told me if I did anything stupid, he would kill me," the 18-year-old said.

After picking up the girlfriend, he switched plans and had them drive him to Detroit. He tried to get a room, and the 18-year-old said she tried to mouth a message to a clerk at one of the hotels, but it went unnoticed. Samples made them leave the hotel after a short time, and they resumed driving southward, initially planning to go to Atlanta.

At one point, both were upset, one crying and the other having a panic attack. To that, the 18-year-old said Samples shouted: "If both of you don't stop in five seconds, somebody is going to die!"

They quieted down as he began counting to five.

By the time they were in Tennessee, he let them go, she said.

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Tare Wigod presented the two girls as witnesses, and 52nd-3rd District Judge Lisa Asadoorian ordered Samples to stand trial.

Throughout the two-hour hearing, Samples, who has pleaded not guilty, smiled and expressed exasperation at the testimony.

Samples, who faces up to life in prison, will be arraigned in the coming weeks in Oakland County Circuit Court.

WIC probe finds fraud

Some area families face loss of benefits

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, October 07, 2005

By Shantell M. Kirkendoll
skirkendoll@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6366

GENESEE COUNTY - About 300 families in Genesee County may be cut off from the Women, Infants and Children program after a fraud investigation showed abuse of food coupons.

A state investigation showed \$40,000 worth of coupons were fraudulently redeemed at a local store, perhaps for products other than food, or the coupons were used earlier than allowed.

Families will have the chance to appeal before benefits end, which is likely to be this month, officials said. Notification letters should arrive next week. Through WIC, low-income pregnant women, mothers and their children get nutrition counseling and health checks. But the program's hallmark is food coupons for milk, cheese, eggs and cereal.

It's unclear which store is involved or where it's located. A state health department spokesman on Wednesday said the investigation is continuing. With the Michigan attorney general's office and state inspector general taking the lead, the Genesee County Health Department had few details about the investigation.

Possibilities are families used the coupons for products other than food, redeemed them earlier than effective dates or traded them for cash, said Robert Pestronk, director of the county health department.

WIC enrollees could have faced criminal charges. Instead, the families face banishment from WIC for a year, a tough penalty on its own, Pestronk said.

"We'll see what folks have to say," Pestronk said of any upcoming appeal hearings. "It was a short-sighted decision. They'll lose not only food, but counseling and health referrals."

The state health department doles out the money to provide WIC benefits, but county health departments are responsible for distributing the coupons and providing counseling.

Food stamps for the poor are now handled electronically to prevent fraud, but WIC still uses paper coupons that families redeem at grocery stores.

The program is credited with preventing malnutrition in American children and helping women have full-term pregnancies and successful breastfeeding.

"The benefit to pregnant women is their children start with a step up in life," the health director said.

QUICK TAKE

WIC trouble

Families accused of defrauding the Women, Infants and Children program will begin getting letters next week notifying them their benefits will end.

Families can request an appeal hearing before benefits end this month.

At the end of 2004, Genesee County had 13,060 people enrolled. Even if the county WIC caseload drops as a result of the fraud investigation, funding for remaining families will not be affected, Pestronk said.

The state investigation included looking at whether local health department staff participated in the scam. They concluded no staff were part of it, Pestronk said.

"We took the investigation very seriously," he said. "The state kept many of the details close to the vest. It was a tremendous sigh of relief among those who knew about it that no local staff were involved."

Group will pick up goods for food pantries

Friday, October 07, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

All County Churches Emergency Support System will collect food and personal hygiene items Saturday to restock local food pantries.

There will be front-door pickup from 9 a.m. to noon in Grand Rapids (west of M-37 and south of Int. 96), East Grand Rapids, Kentwood (west of Broadmoor and north of 60th Street), Walker (south of Three Mile Road, east of Wilson Avenue and north of O'Brien/Butterworth Drive) and Wyoming (north of 36th Street) by volunteers.

Items most needed are beans and rice, canned meats, soup, canned fruits, cereal, coffee, pasta and sauces (no glass), peanut butter, soap, shampoo, toilet paper, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Those outside the pickup zones can drop off items at Family Fare supermarkets and various churches.

For more information, call ACCESS at 774-2175.

Visitation with grandchildren at issue in court hearing

Friday, October 07, 2005

By Ken Kolker
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The Kent County Family Court schedule includes a hearing today for suspected wife killer Timothy Dawson, who has moved out of Michigan and is fighting to keep his 2-year-old son from his former in-laws.

But Dawson, identified as the only suspect in the slaying 10 months ago of Julia Dawson, wasn't expected to attend.

His attorney refuses to say where he and his son, Alex, are living, though she said Dawson is not hiding from Kent County sheriff's detectives.

"The police know where he is," attorney Judy Bregman said. "They know exactly where he is."

Dawson's former in-laws, Tamara and Kevin Keenan, of Ada Township, said they hope to learn where he is living so they can start court-ordered visitation with Alex, their grandson.

"Every time where we come to a point where they've got to let us see him, they do something else," Tamara Keenan said.

Kent County Sheriff's detectives say Dawson, 29, killed Julia Dawson, 23, on Dec. 11, the day before he reported her missing from their home in Sparta. Her disappearance led to a search by family and friends until her nude body was found Jan. 3 in southern Montcalm County.

Detectives have refused to say what evidence they have against Dawson or how his wife was killed. In April, they said his arrest was imminent.

Dawson, who has a previous conviction for domestic violence, has denied killing his wife, according to his attorney.

"It's been six months since they said his arrest was imminent," Dawson's attorney said Thursday.

"Obviously, their definition of imminent is different than mine."

Kent County sheriff's officials did not return repeated phone calls regarding the Dawson case.

Since the death, Dawson has been in and out of court fighting over custody and visitation of his children, including Alexander. He has two daughters from a previous marriage.

Kent County Family Court Judge Patricia Gardner ruled in April that Julia Dawson's parents should have "grandparenting time" with Alexander. The Keenans hope to reunite Alexander with Julia's 5-year-old son, Kevin, from a previous relationship.

"We are not bad people," Tamara Keenan said this week. "All we're asking to do is have time with Alex, not just for us, but for his brother."

Dawson left the state in June, claiming detectives were harassing him and cost him his job at VanBelkum Business Systems, 535 Cascade Parkway SE.

Last month, Dawson and the grandparents agreed to a visitation plan, which was approved by the judge. The grandparents also must submit to drug testing because Tamara Keenan admitted in court she had smoked marijuana.

The Keenans also aren't allowed to say anything bad to Alex about his father.

Dawson's attorney recently asked the judge not to scrap the visitation plan, saying she plans to take the case to the Court of Appeals.

"It does not make sense for this 2-year-old child to establish any relationships with the plaintiffs," Bregman, the attorney, wrote in her motion. "He currently has no relationship with them and, in fact, never has. If a relationship were to be started and the Court of Appeals overturns the lower court, then Alex will suffer yet another loss in his life."

Tamara Keenan said she believes Dawson will be arrested soon.

"I understand why it has to take so long," she said. "They only get to try him once."

Wife pleads guilty in husband's slaying

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, October 07, 2005

By Paul Janczewski

pjanczewski@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6333

A Burton woman said she "just lost my temper" when she shot her husband during an argument that started in their residence and moved outdoors.

But Kathy O. Phaneuf also said she did not intend to shoot him.

"I inadvertently shot the gun," she told Genesee Circuit Visiting Judge Thomas L. Brown. "I didn't mean to hurt anybody."

Phaneuf, 50, on Thursday pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and felony firearms in the Feb. 19 death of Ronald E. Phaneuf.

She entered the plea just before her trial was to begin. First-degree murder was one of the charges a jury would have considered at trial.

She faces a minimum 20-year jail sentence - 2 years for the weapon charge and at least 18 years for the slaying.

"The evidence was pretty overwhelming, and the likelihood of a (lesser) manslaughter conviction (at trial) was pretty slim," her attorney, Barry Wolf, said of the decision to enter a plea.

Brown scheduled a Nov. 1 sentencing for Phaneuf, who is being held without bond in the Genesee County Jail.

Kathy Phaneuf said she and her husband were arguing at their residence at 6275 E. Lapeer Road about 11 p.m. as she was packing up to move from the home.

Relatives said Ronald Phaneuf, 49, had filed for divorce in August 2004 and obtained a court order giving him possession of the residence, which he had owned for 15 years.

He apparently grew tired of the argument and went to the garage, and his wife followed.

She said she went in the house, grabbed a loaded .38-caliber revolver, returned to the garage and pointed it at him when it inadvertently fired.

Kathy Phaneuf said she threw the weapon in a river a short time after the slaying. It was later recovered by police.

At earlier hearings, witnesses said she complained of emotional abuse.

Police had been called to the residence in the past for domestic violence, and she had filed a personal protection order against him, but it had not been served.

But relatives said Ronald Phaneuf was a gentle man who showed no violent tendencies.

"All he wanted was a divorce and to start a new life, and she took that away," said Richard Phaneuf, 52, of Columbiaville, the victim's brother.

Ellen Chapman, 53, of Burton, the victim's sister, said the family had mixed emotions about the plea deal. But she said the family also knew a jury might not have learned enough about her brother to convict Kathy Phaneuf on the most serious charge.

"We're glad she admitted to doing it," Chapman said.

Miranda rights at issue in Troy killing

By John Michalak

Daily Tribune Staff Writer

PUBLISHED: October 5, 2005

PONTIAC — Confessions made to police by Amir Aziz Shahideh in the baseball bat beating and knife slaying of his girlfriend Leila Kristine Armin didn't require officers to read him his Miranda rights because he wasn't in custody at the time, Assistant Oakland County Prosecuting Attorney Tare Wigod argued at a hearing Monday.

However, defense attorney Matt Leitman argued for "common sense" saying there was no doubt Shahideh, 24, of Bloomfield Hills was "in custody from the beginning."

At issue are three admissions by Shahideh before detectives advised him of his rights not to give statements to police and to have an attorney to represent him.

Oakland County Circuit Judge Steven N. Andrews told attorneys he will give a written opinion on the issue "soon" before Shahideh's first degree murder trial is scheduled to begin Dec. 1. The defense wants those admissions banned from the trial, while the prosecution wants them allowed as evidence.

Shahideh is charged with first degree murder and alternate charges of second degree murder and manslaughter in the June 17 slaying of Armin, 20, of Troy.

Police say a quarrel started over the couple's relationship at her house on Pondway Drive.

Shahideh allegedly hit her several times with a baseball bat and then stabbed her in the chest "to put her out of her misery," Detective Sgt. Suzanne Post testified. A total of six Troy police officers testified at the hearing.

Post said Shahideh's two admissions to the slaying came in a police vehicle when leaving the murder scene and in a tape recorded interview at the Troy Police station the same day. A third came later when police asked about duct tape evidence, she added.

Shahideh initiated the contact with police, wanting to talk, because "something bad had happened," Troy Lt. Keith Frye testified.

Wigod said the standard for police to read suspects their Miranda rights is "custodial interrogation."

He described Shahideh's statements as a "cathartic occurrence" coming in a talkative, stressed state Post described as "like a balloon letting go of air at one time."

She said Shahideh wanted to talk but insisted on leaving the slaying scene to be out of sight of his parents. Initially, detectives intended on talking to him in an unmarked police car, but Shahideh agreed talking at the Troy police station would be better, police said.

Police had routinely frisked Shahideh to make sure he wasn't armed. When directed to the unmarked police car, Post said Shahideh stretched out his arms to be handcuffed, but was told he wasn't under arrest.

As Post and Detective Sgt. James Clark drove away with Shahideh, he started crying while talking without any prompting from police, Post added.

At the police station, Post said Miranda rights were read to Shahideh about 18 minutes into a two-hour interview after he admitted killing Armin. Shahideh admitted hitting her with a

baseball bat, stabbing her, wrapping her body in sheets and garbage bags, and dumping her body in a nearby garbage container, police said.

Following the interview, police formally arrested, booked and lodged Shahideh in the city jail.

Prior to reading Shahideh his rights, police insisted he wasn't in custody.

The third admission came when Troy Detective Sgt. Barry Whiteside arranged for Shahideh's parents to see him at the Troy jail. The parents advised Whiteside they were going to advise their son not to talk with police, he testified.

"I said I thought that was a good idea," he said. However, Whiteside said a representative of the Oakland County Medical Examiner's office called Troy police telling investigators to ask Shahideh where he put duct tape evidence.

"I approached Mr. Shahideh who said he had nothing to hide," Whiteside said. "He said he hid it in a Dumpster."

Wigod argued Shahideh wasn't in custody or being interrogated when he confessed in the police car. He said Shahideh also wasn't in custody early in the police station questioning which Wigod acknowledged was an interrogation.

While police initially went to the Armin's house on a missing person complaint, Leitman argued they soon determined the case involved something more sinister from blood spattering evidence.

"Mr. Shahideh was in custody from the beginning," he said. "The way (police) interacted with him (showed) he wasn't free to leave." Frisking a person is what police do when taking someone into custody, he added.

Armin graduated from Troy High School and was an all state tennis star who was 34-0 and the state champ in her junior year. Her parents are Dr. Ali-Reza and Nahid Armin.

The Detroit News

October 7, 2005

Detroit

Aide faces charge of patient abuse

A former nursing home employee has been charged with punching a 78-year-old patient. Rita Lynn Burton, 46, a certified nursing assistant, was arraigned on one count of misdemeanor patient abuse, and released on a \$3,000 personal recognizance bond. The complaint against Burton alleges that she punched a woman who uses a wheelchair and suffers from dementia at Moroun Nursing Home in Detroit. If convicted, Burton could face up to one year in jail and \$10,000 in fines.

Grant will help low-income people buy homes

Friday, October 07, 2005

By Robert C. Burns

MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

The Muskegon Housing Commission will receive \$42,420 from the federal government to help local low-income individuals receive job training, employment and home ownership counseling. The money is coming through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and more specifically, its Housing Choice Voucher/Family Self-Sufficiency program.

Under it, coordinators will link adults who receive rental assistance to local organizations that provide job training, child care, counseling, transportation and job placement.

Participants sign a contract saying the head of the household will get a job and the family will no longer receive welfare assistance at the end of five years. As the family income rises, a portion of it is held in an interest-earning account. If the family fulfills all the requirements, they will receive that money, which can be used for such purposes as making a down payment on a home, paying for school expenses, starting a business or paying debts.

"Gaining employment or increasing one's potential to obtain a higher paying job is the first step in economic independence that leads to a world full of opportunities, including home ownership," HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson said in announcing the grant awards.

Community housing authorities in Michigan will receive a total of \$968,576, out of \$45.5 million being awarded nationwide, to help families get job training and employment.

For further information about the program, contact Louis Berra of the agency's Grand Rapids office at (616) 456-2100, ext. 2125.

Home makeovers planned for needy

Female builders look for a way to give back

Friday, October 7, 2005

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

After building a Habitat for Humanity house earlier this year, the Women's Council has begun a new project called Not So Extreme Home Makeovers. The idea is to help people in need make repairs to their homes.

The Women's Council is partnering with the Remodelers Council of the HBALC and the Women's Resource Center, which will provide the names of people who need repairs done.

Thursday night, people from the community were to gather for the Harvest for Housing at Town Commons in Howell to raise money for the Not So Extreme Home Makeovers. Kristin Schrader, co-chairwoman of the event, says those who attend would be able to bid on all sorts of artwork.

"We also had a golf outing a few weeks back to raise money," Schrader said.

"The Women's Build was so successful last year that we wanted to move on to something different."

The Women's Build was a house built mostly by women for the Livingston County Habitat for Humanity. It was built in Handy Township and dedicated in June. Linda Lock, owner of Maplewood Building Co., was the construction manager and also came up with the idea for the makeovers.

"It felt good to give back to the community, and I had the idea for the makeovers as a way to continue giving back," Lock said. "It will involve and help a lot of people. We haven't put a number on how many because it will depend on the type of requests we get and the amount of funds we raise."

Lock says she hopes to begin the makeover projects in January.

WRC community coordinator Mary Taylor says there are no age or income requirements, and the makeovers are available just to people in Livingston County. People can nominate themselves or someone they know by calling Taylor at (517) 548-2200.

Lisa Carolin can be reached at lcarolin@livingstoncommunitynews.com or at (810) 844-2010.

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[From the Lansing State Journal]

Filing bankruptcy? It's crunch time

In 10 days, all the rules will change

By Stefanie Murray
Lansing State Journal

Ten days and counting.

The latest overhaul of U.S. bankruptcy law - which essentially adds barriers to filing that weren't there in the past, such as credit counseling - goes into effect Oct 17.

The date has got attorneys around Lansing and the nation working at a frantic pace as thousands of consumers race to declare bankruptcy before the new law takes hold.

People still can file before Oct. 17, "but boy, it's really getting down to crunch time right now," said Robert Kempf, a partner in the Lansing-based Bankruptcy Law Center. He estimated the firm's bankruptcy business recently tripled.

"We've been very busy," Kempf said. And he is not alone.

"It's getting to the point where we are not going to be able to take anymore," said Dennis Dudley, a local attorney. "I've probably filed as many in the last month as I have in the past year."

Statistics show that:

- Locally, nonbusiness bankruptcy filings in Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties surged almost 60 percent in September from August, according to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Michigan. A total of 429 bankruptcy petitions were filed, up from 270 in August.
- Statewide, 59,131 petitions were filed through Sept. 30, a 23.4 percent uptick from 2004, according to Lundquist Consulting Inc. of Burlingame, Calif., which compiles bankruptcy statistics.
- Nationwide, bankruptcy petition filings set a record last week, Lundquist reported. As of Oct. 1, 1.36 million Americans declared bankruptcy, 14.1 percent more than at the same time in 2004. What is everyone trying to avoid?

Under the new law, consumers will have more hoops to jump through, especially when filing for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, which erases debt after certain assets are sold off. It's the most popular type of personal bankruptcy.

The rules are designed to funnel more people with some ability to repay into a Chapter 13 case, which basically reorganizes the debt under a payment plan.

For example, bankruptcy applicants will be subject to a new income test, based on their state's median income, to gauge their ability to repay debts. Also, all applicants will have to go through credit counseling.

"There's a misperception that people won't be able to file at all, and that's not true," Kempf said. The new laws set up more stringent standards for businesses, too, including added time parameters for declaring a reorganization plan under a Chapter 11 filing. In the end, the new code also will make more work for attorneys.

"It will likely result in more costs" for debtors, said Scott Chernich of Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith in Lansing, who teaches bankruptcy law at Thomas M. Cooley Law School and is a bankruptcy court trustee.

Experts said filings will drop after the new law takes effect because so many people are filing now and because lawyers need time to absorb it all.

"In all honesty, there are a lot of changes in the code that we haven't had time to fully analyze and digest because we've been so busy trying to get cases filed under the old code," Kempf said. But for now, the rush is on.

Rose Bareham, a bankruptcy court trustee based in Grand Ledge, has been working weekends to keep up. Her caseload is nearly double its normal volume, but that doesn't mean she's rushing through anything.

"As a matter of fact, we are taking a closer look at cases," Bareham said.

Most amazing to Bareham are some stories she's heard, such as people maxing out credit cards right before filing. That'll get you nowhere, she warned.

"Any purchases 60 days before filing, creditors are more likely to go after," Bareham said.

Business changes

The law makes it tougher for businesses that file for bankruptcy protection. Under the new rules:

- **Time limit:** Businesses have the sole right to propose a reorganization plan within 18 months of filing; no more unlimited extensions of this time will be given.
- **Perks discouraged:** Companies will be limited in their ability to give lucrative pay packages as a way of retaining top executives.
- **Speedier decisions:** Businesses must decide within 210 days whether to keep or relinquish leases on property.
- **Creditor option:** Creditors can seek to have a Chapter 7 liquidation filing dismissed or converted to a debt reorganization plan under Chapter 11.

Types of bankruptcies

- **Chapter 7:** Most debt is erased after certain assets have been forfeited to pay creditors.

Chapter 11: Normally for businesses; allows time free from creditors while company reorganizes its finances; very complicated.

- Chapter 12: Special type of bankruptcy reorganization for "family farmers."
- Chapter 13: For individuals; debt is essentially organized into a repayment plan with specific time parameters.

Sources: Associated Press; Gannett News Service

Contact Stefanie Murray at 377-1016 or stamurray@lsj.com.

October 6, 2005

SENATE RESOLUTIONS CALL FOR 'STATUS QUO' ON BENEFITS

Two resolutions calling for the Supreme Court to “take whatever steps are necessary” to maintain the status quo in regards to the state offering same-sex domestic partner benefits passed the Senate in contested votes Thursday.

SCR 33 passed on a 22-16 vote with Sen. Shirley Johnson (R-Troy) and Sen. Bev Hammerstrom (R-Temperance) voting no and Sen. James Barcia (D-Bay City) and Sen. Dennis Olshove (D-Warren) voting yes. SR 68, which was identically worded to SCR 33, passed on a 22-15 vote.

The resolutions were somewhat softer in their wording than when they were introduced last week. Originally, they called for the Supreme Court to issue a temporary restraining order to prevent taxpayer funds going to provide same-sex domestic partner benefits to public employees.

But the resolutions were changed, calling for the court to take whatever steps were needed to ensure that the status of domestic partner benefits issued before the Ingham Circuit Court ruled that such benefits could be offered state workers remained in effect.

Under the newly-adopted language, if the court did take that step, then the state would be unable to offer domestic partner benefits to its employees, but the benefit could continue to be paid to workers in cities and universities across the state that offer those benefits to their workers.

Sponsor of the resolutions, Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt), said it was important for the state to maintain the status quo on the controversial subject until the Supreme Court acts. And, “I don’t know anyone who doesn’t believe the Supreme Court will not take this case,” he said.

In amending the resolutions, a provision calling for the court to expedite action on the case was eliminated, although Mr. Cropsey said he encouraged the court to either take the appeal directly or to urge the Court of Appeals to act quickly on the matter.

Last year, the voters adopted a constitutional amendment defining marriage as only between one man and one woman. The amendment also outlaws any other union as the equivalent of marriage.

The state in 2004 had negotiated to permit same-sex domestic partner benefits, but held off enacting them until there was a ruling on whether they would be affected by the new amendment.

In March, Attorney General Mike Cox ruled in an opinion involving same-sex partner benefits granted by Kalamazoo that the benefits violated the constitutional amendment, but that because they were contract with the employee's union they could stay in effect for the duration of the contract.

Last spring, a court action in Ingham County began challenging the opinion to allow the benefits for state workers. Last week, Circuit Judge Joyce Draganchuk ruled that the benefits were a condition of employment and not of a marital relationship or its equivalent.

Governor Jennifer Granholm said she would see about instituting the benefits, even though Mr. Cox said he would appeal the decision. This week, members of the Civil Service Commission asked for legal consultation on the potential impact of allowing the benefits should the commissioners decide to enact them and a higher court later rule them unconstitutional.

Sen. Gilda Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) said that supporters of the constitutional amendment said a year ago that their proposal had nothing to do with employee benefits, but "clearly that is what this is about."

Homophobia still divides the state, she said, but progress has been made to the point that a legislator could take the floor and speak out in favor of gay rights. Ten years ago that would not have been possible, she said, and she was "confident" that in another decade the Legislature will support equal rights for gays.

But Mr. Cropsey said it was "the right thing to do" to hold off any action on domestic benefits for same-sex couples until the Supreme Court had ruled. "The status quo should be maintained until the final disposition of the court," he said.

The Triangle Foundation, a gay rights group in Detroit, issued a statement blasting Mr. Cropsey for "gay-bashing," and said that Mr. Cropsey, "who is obsessed with all things gay, led this latest attack on gay and lesbian families simply for the sport of it, since the resolutions have no authority."

Published October 7, 2005

Senate: Wait on gay benefits

Measures calls for blocking insurance until top court rules

By David Eggert
Associated Press

The state Senate on Thursday approved resolutions urging the Michigan Supreme Court to block public-sector employers, including state government, from providing health insurance to the partners of gay employees until the court makes a final ruling on the issue.

The Republican-controlled Senate voted 22-16, mostly along party lines, to pass two resolutions to prevent taxpayer dollars from being spent on same-sex partner benefits until the court reaches a final judgment.

The measures are symbolic and do not have the force of law.

"If we're really concerned about not disrupting people's lives, we ought to keep the status quo until the court makes a decision," said Sen. Alan Cropsey, a DeWitt Republican who sponsored the measures.

A Supreme Court spokeswoman said the court generally does not comment on pending matters. It's unclear what action, if any, the court could take because the state Court of Appeals normally weighs in on legal cases before the high court does.

An Ingham County judge ruled last month that public universities and governments could provide domestic partner benefits without violating a constitutional amendment approved by voters in November.

Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm then said she would ask the state Civil Service Commission to approve domestic partner benefits for state employees. The benefits had been included in new labor contracts, but Granholm put them on hold while waiting for a court ruling.

Sen. Gilda Jacobs, D-Huntington Woods, urged colleagues to vote against the measures. "We should be celebrating this great state's diversity, not discriminating against certain people."